

NEWS RELEASE

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Two Quad Cities Men Sentenced to Prison on Federal Gun Charges in Project Safe Neighborhoods Prosecutions

Rock Island, Illinois – Rodger A. Heaton, United States Attorney for the Central District of Illinois, announced that earlier today, January 6, 2006, Ronald Ronnell Hearn was sentenced to more than nine years in prison on a federal charge of being a felon in possession of ammunition, and Albert Johnson Butler was sentenced to more than five years in prison for being a felon in possession of a firearm. United States District Judge Joe Billy McDade imposed both sentences in the U.S. District Court at Rock Island.

Hearn, age 22, of Rock Island, was sentenced to 110 months (9 years and 2 months) in prison without parole as a result of his conviction for being a felon in possession of ammunition. According to the affidavit in support of a federal criminal complaint filed in the case on November 3, 2004, Hearn allegedly fired several shots from a semi-automatic handgun at a vehicle while driving through an alley near 5th Street and 13th Avenue in Rock Island. In addition, according to the affidavit, Hearn allegedly fired several shots from the same handgun at a residence near 12th Street and 16th Avenue in Rock Island later that day. According to the complaint, Rock Island police recovered spent ammunition cartridges from each of the scenes of the shootings. Those cartridges were the basis for the federal charge. Also according to the complaint and other court documents filed in the case, Hearn had previously been convicted twice in Rock Island County – in 2001 for robbery and in 2002 for the felony crimes of reckless discharge of a firearm and being a felon in possession of a firearm.

Butler, age 21, of Davenport, Iowa, was sentenced to 70 months (5 years and 10 months) in prison without parole as a result of his conviction for being a felon in possession of a firearm. According to the plea agreement filed in the case, on April 27, 2005, Rock Island police arrested Butler on an outstanding Scott County, Iowa arrest warrant. During a search of the apartment in Rock Island where Butler was arrested, Rock Island officers found a 9 mm semi-automatic handgun. According to the plea agreement, Butler admitted during a subsequent interview with police that the handgun belonged to him and that he had purchased it on the street for \$70. According to the indictment, Butler had been previously convicted in the State of Iowa for the felony offenses of burglary and possession of a controlled substance with the intent to deliver.

The Hearn case was investigated by the Rock Island Police Department and the Quad Cities Federal Gang Task Force with the assistance of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Sara Darrow. The Butler case was investigated by the Rock Island Police Department with the assistance of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney John Mehochko.

Both cases were prosecuted through the Department of Justice's Project Safe Neighborhoods Initiative. Project Safe Neighborhoods targets armed career criminals, armed drug dealers, and other violent criminals and convicted felons who unlawfully possess and use firearms and ammunition. The objective of Project Safe Neighborhoods is to make neighborhoods safer by removing violent criminals and deterring incidents of violence.

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